



How to Become an AI-First Enterprise

18 steps to get started

Breakdown by:

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& Lewis Walker



1. Executive storytelling to set the vision

PRINCIPLE

Align:

How to align your company, employees and leadership on your AI strategy.

ACTION

Executive storytelling to set the vision:

Be specific on why AI adoption is key to your company's future driving growth. A clear “why” builds trust and shows how change supports employees’ goals.



Sawsen Haj Amor



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2. Set a company-wide AI adoption goal

PRINCIPLE

Align:

How to align your company, employees and leadership on your AI strategy.

ACTION

Set a company-wide AI adoption goal:

Define measurable targets tied to daily work, like new use cases or tool usage, and embed them into planning and KPIs. Share progress to build momentum.



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3. Leaders role-modeling AI use

PRINCIPLE

Align:

How to align your company, employees and leadership on your AI strategy.

ACTION

Leaders role-modeling AI use:

Ask senior executives to share how they use AI in their roles. Hearing from leadership how AI helps them normalizes and encourages adoption and experimentation across teams.



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4. Functional leader sessions

PRINCIPLE

Align:

How to align your company, employees and leadership on your AI strategy.

ACTION

Functional leader sessions:

Line-of-business leaders are best placed to connect AI initiatives to each team's work realities. Encourage sessions that highlight use cases, invite feedback, and answer questions.



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5. Launch a structured AI skills program

PRINCIPLE

Activate:

How to enable and motivate teams to use AI.

ACTION

Launch a structured AI skills program:

Ask your Learning & Development team to design role-specific training that moves employees from basic awareness to hands-on AI use, prioritizing skills that support real workflows.



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6. Functional leader sessions

PRINCIPLE

Activate:

How to enable and motivate teams to use AI.

ACTION

Establish an AI champions network:

Identify and train passionate employees to serve as internal AI mentors. These champions support colleagues through workshops, informal coaching, and best practices.



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7. Make experimentation routine

PRINCIPLE

Activate:

How to enable and motivate teams to use AI.

ACTION

Make experimentation routine:

Give employees regular time to explore AI tools. Dedicate a day each month for teams to workshop how AI could improve their work, paired with no-code hackathons and fast approvals.



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8. Make it count

PRINCIPLE

Activate:

How to enable and motivate teams to use AI.

ACTION

Make it count:

Directly link AI engagement to performance evaluations. Use OKRs to set clear, role-specific goals like piloting new use cases, and highlight contributions in promotions and recognition.



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9. Launch a centralized AI knowledge hub

PRINCIPLE

Amplify:

How to amplify wins and use cases across your teams.

ACTION

Launch a centralized AI knowledge hub:

Build a single, easy-to-access hub where employees can find AI training, hackathon dates, policies, guides, and best practices, reducing duplication and saving time.



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10. Consistently share success stories

PRINCIPLE

Amplify:

How to amplify wins and use cases across your teams.

ACTION

Consistently share success stories:

Highlight impactful AI projects, practical lessons, and replicable wins through newsletters, webinars, or all-hands segments. Share steps so others can easily apply insights.



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11. Build active internal communities

PRINCIPLE

Amplify:

How to amplify wins and use cases across your teams.

ACTION

Build active internal communities:

Create dedicated groups to promote peer-to-peer learning, collaboration, and rapid sharing. Leverage your AI champions to drive discussion and engagement.



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12. Reinforce wins at the team level

PRINCIPLE

Amplify:

How to amplify wins and use cases across your teams.

ACTION

Reinforce wins at the team level:

Ask team leaders to spotlight AI successes in regular meetings, highlighting both major achievements and smaller improvements. Recognition signals AI is tied to team impact.



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13. Unblock access to AI tools and data

PRINCIPLE

Accelerate:

How to speed up decisions to keep up with AI.

ACTION

Unblock access to AI tools and data:

Make sure teams can quickly access the data and AI tools they need. If it still takes weeks/months to get approval for basic tooling/pull clean data, your infra is holding you back.



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14. Build a clear AI intake and prioritization process

PRINCIPLE

Accelerate:

How to speed up decisions to keep up with AI.

ACTION

Build a clear AI intake and prioritization process:

Create a simple, transparent way for teams to submit AI project ideas, get feedback, and see how priorities are set to avoid duplication and focus on impact.



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15. Stand up a cross functional AI council

PRINCIPLE

Accelerate:

How to speed up decisions to keep up with AI.

ACTION

Stand up a cross functional AI council:

Create a small, exec-sponsored group to unblock projects, resolve cross-functional issues, and fast-track approvals for high-potential initiatives while keeping efforts aligned,



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16. Reward success to speed up innovation

PRINCIPLE

Accelerate:

How to speed up decisions to keep up with AI.

ACTION

Reward success to speed up innovation:

When teams realize benefits (e.g. efficiencies) with AI, provide resources or time to reinvest in innovation. High-impact teams earn the freedom to keep pushing boundaries.



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17. Create and share a simple responsible AI playbook

PRINCIPLE

Govern:

How to run lightweight guidelines and responsible AI use.

ACTION

Create and share a simple responsible AI playbook:

Document practical guidelines that help teams use AI responsibly, and make decisions consistent with guidelines instead of needing manual compliance reviews each time. Focus on what's "safe to try" and what requires escalation.



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18. Run regular reviews of your AI practices

PRINCIPLE

Govern:

How to run lightweight guidelines and responsible AI use.

ACTION

Run regular reviews of your AI practices:

Hold lightweight quarterly audits of your AI systems, processes, and governance guidelines. Focus on whether current protocols still make sense, both in protecting the business and enabling teams to move fast.



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Full leadership guide:

<https://cdn.openai.com/pdf/ae250928-4029-4f26-9e23-afac1fcee14c/staying-ahead-in-the-age-of-ai.pdf>

For more: *enterpriseaiexecutive.ai*

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